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Laymen's Missionary Movement

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

MR. SAMUEL B. CAPEN, OF BOSTON

BEFORE THE

Annual Conference of the Foreign Missions Boards
in the United States and Canada

PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 9, 1907

"WE CAN DO IT IF WE WILL"

Samuel J. Mills, at the
Haystack Prayer Meeting
Eighteen Hundred and Six

"WE CAN DO IT AND WE WILL"

President Samuel B. Capen, of the
American Board at the Centennial
of the Haystack Prayer Meeting
Nineteen Hundred and Six



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On November 13th and 14th, 1906, there was held in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, in New York, an interdenominational meeting in commemoration of the centennial of the Haystack Prayer Meeting. On the afternoon and evening following, November 15th, there met in the chapel of the same church a company of laymen. The invitation to this meeting was in the form of "A Call to Prayer," and was issued by a committee of laymen, of which Mr. Mornay Williams was chairman. In this "Call" it was stated that the need of the hour was for the consecration of laymen to the work of missions and those invited were asked to join with other laymen of various denominations in this great work. Those present will never forget the spiritual uplift they received from these two sessions. The time in the afternoon was spent almost wholly in prayer, as was also a part of the evening. As a result, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted and a committee appointed :

Whereas, in the marvelous Providence of God the One Hundredth Anniversary of the beginnings of the American Foreign Missionary movement finds the doors of every nation open to the gospel message, and

Whereas, the machinery of the missionary boards, women's boards, student and young people's missionary movements is highly and efficiently organized, and

Whereas, the greatly increased participation of the present generation of responsible Christian business and professional men is essential to the widest and most productive use of the existing missionary agencies, and is equally vital to the growth of the spiritual life at home, and

Whereas, in the management of large business and political responsibilities, such men have been greatly used and honored, and

Whereas, in but few of the denominations have aggressive movements to interest men in missions been undertaken;

Therefore be it resolved, that this gathering of laymen, called together for prayer and conference on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the Haystack Prayer Meeting, designate a committee of twenty-five or more representative laymen to consult with the secretaries of the missionary boards of all the denominations in the United States and Canada, if possible at their annual gathering in January, with reference to the following vitally important propositions :

1. *To project a campaign of education among laymen to be conducted under the direction of the various boards.*
2. *To devise a comprehensive plan (in conjunction with said board secretaries) looking toward the evangelization of the world in this generation,*
3. *To endeavor to form, through the various boards, a Centennial Commission of Laymen, fifty or more in number, to visit as early as possible the mission-fields and report their findings to the church at home.*

The names of the full committee as at present organized, I submit as an appendix to this paper. A meeting of the whole committee was held in New York, December 13th, and they appointed an Executive Committee of nine, consisting of the following men: Samuel B. Capen, Chairman; Mornay Williams, Vice-Chairman; John B. Sleman, Jr., Secretary; and Messrs. Wm. Jay Schieffelin, S. W. Woodward, John R. Mott, J. Campbell White, Robert E. Speer and Eben E. Olcott.

WHY

In considering this new movement, the first inquiry is *why* it should be organized. With the present multiplicity of societies and organizations, there ought to be a great necessity to warrant the establishment of another. Any man to-day has a right to challenge any new organization which presents itself. My first answer therefore, to the *why* is :

First, because of the inadequacy of the present plans and methods of missionary work. In making this statement I am not failing to recognize the great work that has already been

accomplished. The success of modern missions has been one of the great triumphs of the centuries. We have planted Christian churches and schools and colleges and hospitals and printing plants and have transformed nations. The success of this work challenges the admiration of all familiar with it. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that this represents the work of only a small minority of our church members. It is believed that not more than one-fourth of the Christians in this country make an offering to foreign missions worthy of the name. I am not claiming that a larger proportion than this do not give a nickel or a dime or some insignificant trifle, but I believe that no larger proportion than I have stated give for foreign missions at all in proportion to their ability. That this is true is evident when we note the small average of the gift per member in any of our denominations. One of our Boards has reached an average of \$2 per member, one or two others about \$1 per member, but with others the average is less than one-half of this smaller amount. Is it not pitiable, nineteen centuries after the cross of Christ, for us to be obliged to acknowledge that we are giving on an average less than half a cent a day to evangelize the world?

What makes it especially reprehensible is the fact that we have grown so enormously rich. It is not necessary for me here to repeat figures that have been given again and again, and which show that we have an amount of wealth in our possession which a generation or two ago would have been considered fabulous. We cannot have any patience with a man who argues that we cannot afford to do many times what we are doing now. We have the money in our pockets. There is a perfect mine of wealth in the possession of the rich and of those of moderate means alike, which is as yet untouched. It is not a question of *can or cannot*, it is a question of *will or will not*. Am I not right in saying, therefore, that we need to supplement our present methods with something else in order that we may more speedily evangelize the nations? This is the primary purpose of the new movement.

Second. The second reason for this new movement is the indifference to all foreign missionary work of very many in pews and pulpits alike. There are too many who care nothing whatever for any missions anywhere. Some of these can be ap-

pealed to through patriotic motives for work in our home land and through self interest for city missionary work. But for work for people thousands of miles away, people whom they have never seen and never expect to see, for this they have not the slightest interest whatever. The missionary message so far has not touched multitudes of men in our churches, the very ones this movement is designed to reach.

Third. We need something radically different from our present plans and methods because many people do not consider proper proportion in their various gifts. We rejoice in the great benefactions for secular education and philanthropy here at home, but the foreign missionary appeal is too often forgotten. There are resources enough for all. The time was fifty years ago when the missionary appeal was dominant everywhere. This is no longer true. Thousands of men are making their personal appeal for various enterprises, many of them good in themselves, but in no sense comparable in importance with the missionary appeal. I was present a little time ago in a great metropolitan church, where I saw in the book-rack a pledge card with a list of the benevolent offerings in that church, and there were twenty-one objects included upon that card. Furthermore, there was nothing to emphasize the six missionary societies of that denomination or to distinguish them in any way from the other fifteen. In other words, the regular missionary work of the Congregational churches had to compete in the house of God with fifteen other causes. Another church near my home has about twenty-five in its list. Certainly the time has fully come to adopt some new plans which shall give proper place and emphasis to the regular missionary work of our churches. In our new movement we want to make it clear to all that missions are the supreme work of the church, and that money given for work abroad inevitably tends to help and not hinder generous gifts at home.

Fourth. We should recognize as never before the *world-wide opportunity*. The doors are open all over the world and the commercial traveler is entering everywhere. Is it to be an open door for all kinds of business and a closed door for the Gospel of Christ? And that too, merely for lack of means to enter in. The element of time in all this work is vital. In non-Christian countries which have come into touch with the western world and its civilization, the people are giving up their

old forms of religion. Unless we give them something better they will drift inevitably, as hundreds of thousands of them are doing, into agnosticism. Again we have in Africa the Mohammedan peril. Many of the tribes are giving up their old heathen customs and are being captured by the Moslem faith. If they adopt this, it will be harder for us then to reach them with Christianity than when they were in heathen darkness. One object of the commission is so to present the opportunity to the churches that no more time shall be lost. The rapid changes in the Far East the last few years present not only many opportunities but also wonderful possibilities. Our business men must have that broader vision that takes in the whole world.

Fifth. Our own *spiritual safety* requires a more vigorous missionary campaign. It must be most displeasing to Christ, when he has done so much for us, to see us so selfish and unwilling to give as freely as we have received. In our great material prosperity the only thing that will save our nation from the sins of luxury and vice, which always accompany such conditions, is to use our wealth and opportunities for the saving of others. "The heathen are saving the church," is the most significant title of a recent address by Bishop Lawrence. We might go even farther and say that the heathen must save the nation. America must save the world if she would save herself, and our laymen have it in their power now to turn the current of thought in the churches to these higher things. We want also to *save men* and then we shall have their gifts.

Sixth. *A proper recognition and appreciation of the brave men who represent us at the front* demand that we do far more than we are doing now to support them. We are practically starving them out and crippling them for the want of supplies and proper reinforcements. Only in missions is there failure to press with energy and enterprise every advantage.

Seventh. At the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Foreign Missions Boards of the United States and Canada, held just previous to the Student Volunteer Convention, at Nashville, Tennessee, February 28 to March 4, 1906, the following resolutions were adopted, calling for one thousand volunteers per year until the fields are occupied :

"That it is the judgment of this Conference that in order to arouse the Churches to a sense of their privilege and respon-

sibility, and in order to meet but inadequately the present needs in the mission fields under the boards represented by this Conference, there ought to be at least one thousand volunteers ready to be sent each year until those fields are occupied in force.

“That we appeal to the students represented in this quadrennial students’ convention that they by asking to be sent to these needy waiting fields a thousand strong each year, challenge the Churches, where final responsibility must rest, to provide the necessary funds.”

With the enthusiasm at present evident among the young people of our country it is easily possible to have in a short time a thousand volunteers each year ready for the field. If this is true, certainly we must be up and doing to have the means ready to finance the work of this increasing number of men and women eager to go to the front.

Eighth. We need a great addition to the *Christian educational institutions* abroad, in order to train more rapidly native teachers and preachers. We need more hospitals and more printing and industrial plants. As we have been going on the last few years, no one of our missionary boards out of its regular income can supply these needs. We want what President King of Oberlin has called “capitalistic statesmen.”

WHAT IT IS NOT

(1) It is not a new Missionary Board to collect funds or to administer them; it is not to raise up or to send out missionaries; it is not to seek to use its influence among young people, students or women; but its work is to be chiefly among the mature men of the church.

(2) It is not an interdenominational movement which proposes to do its work *outside* of regular denominational lines or to make a new Missionary Brotherhood independent of those already established.

WHAT IT IS

In the spirit of the declaration of principles already given, it is *first* a “movement.” I have always liked the word. It expresses life, energy, progress. It represents something not necessarily bound to old traditions and certainly something

that does not run in ruts. It is a *dynamo* giving added force and power to existing machinery. It is a *promoting agency* to facilitate work already under way. We want to create, if possible, a tremendous energy which shall be felt through all our churches.

Second. It is a “*missionary movement*.” It has a great ideal, namely, to reach the whole world in this generation. It recognizes the fact that the church has been in the “*retail business*” long enough. It is a challenge for something larger and more far-reaching. Its broad statesmanship will appeal to men. Its purpose is to do the largest thing of which anyone has any conception,—“to devise a comprehensive plan (in conjunction with said Board secretaries) looking toward the evangelization of the world in this generation.” It is to ask the men of this generation not to pass their own work on to future generations, but to do it themselves, now.

Third. It is a “*laymen’s missionary movement*.” It is intended for the mature men of this generation who are in the thick of the fight. It is not an appeal to students or to women and young people; the special work for these classes belongs to other organizations; it is an appeal to the mature *men* of today who now have in hand the money which they can give if they will, and who can moreover give their time and thought and prayer to the work.

Fourth. It is an effort to get the denominations at home to work more closely together than ever before. It is well understood that there is a closer harmony of work on the field than here in the home land. This plan will appeal to the business men of today. It is in harmony with modern methods in the business world. We want to utilize the principles of legitimate promoting. *Together* is the twentieth century watchword.

HOW

First. As already seen, we have a large *central committee* in which we expect to have all the large denominations represented and in which we have included representatives of kindred movements. It is, in a sense, an interdenominational federation, through this committee, of foreign missionary work. We hope in time to have a body of at least a hundred men who

shall meet perhaps once or twice a year for consultation and action. It is proposed to select these men with great care, every one, to quote Mr. Mott, being a "live wire."

Second. It is our purpose to devise *some plan* for bringing men, through pledges or otherwise, under such positive and definite obligations for missionary support as shall match the present day opportunities and be worthy of themselves, and worthy of Christ.

Third. It is our thought to work wherever possible *through existing organizations*. We have men's clubs and various organizations which may be utilized in cooperation with the Young People's Missionary Movement. In this we shall simply be following the plan of the Student Volunteers, who, in our colleges, have used wherever possible the existing organizations. In some of the churches one Board has charge of the work of both Home and Foreign Missions. Such Boards may consider it expedient to have the movement embrace the whole work carried on by the Board. This is a matter the committee leaves to the judgment of each Board so constituted, trusting the Board to keep in view the central object of the movement—the evangelization of the world.

Fourth. We would respectfully ask this Conference of Secretaries to comply with the resolutions of the executive committee of the movement, which read as follows :

Resolved :

That we earnestly recommend to the Foreign Missions Boards of all denominations that they secure groups of laymen to promote campaigns of intelligent and generous interest in foreign missions, with special reference to the men of the church, the expense of these movements to be borne whenever possible by such groups of men, so that the funds of the Boards shall not be drawn upon.

Resolved :

That we request the Boards to ascertain from their missions what they will need in men and money in order to evangelize in this generation the peoples for whose evangelization they are responsible; that we further request each Board to consider the desirability of

adopting as a part of its policy the provision of the men and money needed for this purpose; and we further request each Board to bring before its church or churches the question of the authorization of this policy and the adoption of such plans as will make possible its accomplishment.

Resolved:

That we pledge the support of this movement to the Boards in the accomplishment of this policy and objective.

Resolved:

That we urge an energetic agitation of the whole matter with a view to immediate and aggressive action.

Fifth. We believe it is possible to reach the mature men of our churches through parlor conferences and dining-room conferences, where we can get into close touch with them. We believe that such a policy will be far more successful than the old formal public meeting where it is most difficult to get a grip on individuals. We believe in this way we can have more of what Mr. Wishard called "organized pressure."

Sixth. We believe that it is possible by dividing up the missionary work to have the local churches through their laymen practically underwrite the budget, leaving the receipts from the Sunday Schools, etc., for advance work.

Seventh. We hope it will be possible to come to some agreement among our laymen whereby a certain hour in the day, say 12 o'clock, may be used for a few moments of *silent prayer* for missions. This is already the plan of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew in the Episcopal Church. It would be the recognition anew of prayer as today the mightiest force in the world.

Eighth. Recognizing the need of more intelligence upon missionary subjects among our laymen, we hope there may be prepared by the Boards leaflets which shall give in a pithy way the facts relative to the foreign missionary work. The need of more such literature in attractive form must be apparent to any one who has given it thought or who has tried to find material to use for the business man who does not believe in foreign missions. The shrinkage of the world through

the discovery of steam and the cable has in many ways changed the age of the heroic in missions. Young men and women do not sail out now into the unknown. We must substitute for this an appeal that rests upon a principle founded in turn upon knowledge and education.

Ninth. We believe that great good can be accomplished through a commission of laymen, which, in conference with the Missionary Boards, we hope to be able to send abroad at an early date. We all know how much skepticism and unbelief there is with regard to our whole missionary work. If a commission of men well known in the business world should make a critical examination of our missions, and report what they see, we believe the result would be of inestimable value in putting the truth before the men at home. It is the method now being used in educational circles and its value would be as great in this department. Furthermore, such a commission would be of the greatest possible value to the Orient. The merchants of the East have seen the business of our country represented by men who are too often utterly unworthy and who bring shame and reproach upon our Christian civilization. Let them see the Christian men of America at their best and we shall do much to remove this reproach. We hope, therefore, that the Board Secretaries will recommend the adoption of these resolutions from the executive committee of the laymen's missionary movement:

Resolved:

That we solicit the cooperation of the Boards in making up at as early a date as possible, the full membership of the commission.

Resolved:

That we recommend that the commission so appointed plan to present its final report to the church at home as early as practicable in 1908.

Tenth. By following the above plans we believe that ultimately the men of the churches of all denominations working together can be formed into what may be called a great *missionary party* with leaders from all the denominations.

Finally, let it be said that it seems to us that in the Providence of God this movement is just what is needed to furnish the money and thus hasten the final triumph. We must recognize the evolution and progress in missionary plans which have been going on during the past twenty-five years. The idea of evangelizing the world in this generation was criticised, not to say ridiculed, when it was first spoken of a few years ago. Now it is unanimously adopted at a meeting of laymen composed of some of the most alert and practical men in business life today. We have had Christian Endeavor Societies and Epworth Leagues and other kindred organizations among the young people, which have been turning the thoughts of the youth of our country to the supreme importance of missionary work. We have had the Interdenominational Y. M. C. A. Movement helping to federate the students of the world. Twenty years ago there was organized the Student Volunteer Movement which has already become such a gigantic force and which has for its field the 200,000 students in the United States and Canada. Five years ago came the Young People's Missionary Movement which is in a sense the "home base" of the Student Volunteer Movement and which has for its field chiefly the 20,000,000 of young people. It will be noted that these Movements are especially working upon the men of tomorrow and they certainly are training a generation which we hope will accomplish ten-fold more than the present one. This new Movement deals not with these classes but with men who are today doing the work of the world, who are bearing its burdens, and who have in their possession the money needed to complete the task. In other words, the Student Volunteer Movement has to do with providing the *missionaries*. The Young People's Missionary Movement has to do with the *missionary education and training of the men and women of tomorrow*. The Missionary Boards are admirably equipped for the *work of administration*. The purpose of this new Movement is to furnish more rapidly the *money* and to help push the work all along the line.

For many years I have sat upon the Prudential Committee of the American Board and listened to the pleas of the men at the front who are breaking under the loads they are carrying. They see the awful need all about them, they hear the

cry of the people for help, they know there is money enough at home to do all that is needed, they are pouring out their own life blood day by day, and we have been too often refusing their calls. I cannot bear it any longer, unless I join with you in this new movement to arouse the men of our churches to the glorious opportunities and to the realization of the fact that we are in honor bound to do more than we are now doing. I do not want to make my report in the great assize beyond without doing what I may in this new effort. In Christ's name I believe we shall win the day. Brother-men, **we can do it and we will.**

The first missionary movement was born in a prayer meeting covering the ten days preceding the day of Pentecost and all the great missionary movements in the centuries since have commenced in prayer. The movement of modern American missions began a hundred years ago in a prayer meeting under the shelter of the Haystack at Williamstown. The Student Volunteer Movement and the Young People's Missionary Movement began in a similar way. This new Movement started right. In its turn it began in a prayer meeting, composed of business men and held in the very heart of the city of New York, the commercial metropolis of our country. Having been begun in prayer, may the Lord give such divine guidance and such increased and increasing gifts that the triumph of the Cross may not be far away.

Report of the Business Committee of the Conference presented by its Chairman at the Afternoon Session

JANUARY 9, 1907

The Business Committee to which was referred the paper read by the Mr. S. B. Capen, of Boston, on the Laymen's Missionary Movement, after a prayerful consideration of the paper, begs leave to report as follows:

In behalf of the representatives of the Foreign Mission Boards of the United States and Canada, in conference assembled, in the city of Philadelphia, Jan. 9, 1907, we earnestly express our appreciation of the Laymen's Missionary Movement as outlined by Mr. Samuel B. Capen, who represents in his communication a large number of Christian business men who are profoundly interested in, and committed to the enterprise of the evangelization of the world in this generation.

We recognize this movement as providential, having been born of prayer and of the Spirit. In its spontaneity and timeliness it gives evidence of the hand of God, and we are profoundly convinced that this is but another step in advance toward the completion of His great purpose in the redemption of mankind.

The purpose of the Laymen's Missionary Movement, as expressed in the action of the Laymen who were called together for prayer and conference, in commemoration of the centennial of the Haystack Prayer Meeting in New York City on November 15, 1906, is outlined as follows:

1. To project a campaign of education among laymen, to be conducted under the direction of the various Boards.
2. To devise a comprehensive plan (in conjunction with said Board secretaries) looking toward the evangelization of the world in this generation.
3. To endeavor to form, through the various Boards, a Centennial Commission of Laymen, fifty or more in number, to visit as early as possible the mission fields and report their findings to the church at home.

We, your Committee, recognize the imperative necessity for this new movement, in view of the tremendous demands of a world field, white for the harvest, which requires that the churches of Christendom should lay plans and put forth effort adequate to meet the demands that are upon us.

In reviewing the paper read by Mr. Capen, we feel that the laymen whom he represents have acted with eminent wisdom in defining what this movement *is not* in the following language:

“1. It is not a new Missionary Board to collect funds or to administer them; it is not to raise up or send out missionaries; it is not to seek to use its influence among young people, students or women, but its work is to be chiefly among the mature men of the church.”

“2. It is not an interdenominational movement which proposes to do its work outside of regular denominational lines or to make a new missionary Brotherhood independent of those already established.”

On the contrary, they made it very clear that it is a missionary movement of laymen organized into a promoting agency to facilitate work already under way and we believe in its spirit of broad Christian statesmanship. It constitutes a challenge to our Boards and Missionary Societies to larger and higher endeavor, while at the same time it pledges hearty co-operation with these Boards, and does not contemplate organizations which shall have separate and distinct existence, but prefers to work through these great administrative organizations which already exist.

In view of the foregoing, your committee would recommend that this Conference of Boards should give its hearty endorsement to the resolutions of the Executive Committee of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement which have been submitted to the body in the paper now under consideration, and which read as follows:

“*Resolved*: That we earnestly recommend to the Foreign Missions Boards of all denominations that they secure groups of laymen to promote campaigns of intelligent and generous interest in Foreign Missions, with special reference to the

men of the church, the expense of these movements to be borne whenever possible by such groups of men, so that the funds of the Boards shall not be drawn upon."

"Resolved: That we request the Boards to ascertain from their missions what they will need in men and money in order to evangelize in this generation the peoples for whose evangelization they are responsible; that we further request each Board to consider the desirability of adopting as a part of its policy the provision of the men and money needed for this purpose; and we further request each Board to bring before its church or churches the question of the authorization of this policy and the adoption of such plans as will make possible its accomplishment."

"Resolved: That we pledge the support of this movement to the Boards in the accomplishment of this policy and objective."

"Resolved: That we urge an energetic agitation of the whole matter with a view to immediate and aggressive action."

Your Committee would further recommend that the Boards and Missionary Societies of the United States and Canada, be requested to cooperate with the Executive Committee of the Movement, in the appointment of the Commission requested by the laymen in their paper, and in conclusion—

That the communication to this conference presented by Mr. Samuel B. Capen, in behalf of the Laymen's Missionary Movement, on account of its pre-eminent importance, be given the widest circulation through the church press, and in pamphlet form, in addition to its publication in the proceedings of this body.

Respectfully submitted
by the Committee

{ Alexander Sutherland
Walter R. Lambuth
F. P. Haggard
Robert E. Speer
W. Henry Grant

This report was unanimously approved by the Conference.

PRESS OF THE CRANE CO.